



“Building Communities Together”

A Networking Tool of HUD's Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships

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What's New in HUD Policy?

FBOs and Housing Opportunities for Voucher Recipients

On June 15, Secretary Andrew Cuomo announced that **HUD will award \$10 million in “partnership development” grants to enlist faith-based and other community non-profit organizations in an effort to expand housing opportunities for Housing Choice Voucher recipients.** Housing Choice Vouchers, formerly known as tenant-based Section 8 vouchers, are essentially a rent subsidy enabling recipients to secure affordable housing on the private market.

With the booming economy driving up home prices and rents beyond the rate of inflation, at least 5.4 million Americans pay half or more of their income for rent, or live in substandard housing. In response to this crisis, the President requested an additional 120,000 vouchers in the proposed FY 2001 budget.

For its part, HUD is committed to insuring that the Housing Choice Vouchers allocated by Congress are as fully-utilized as possible. Voucher recipients often experience difficulty obtaining and keeping housing because of discrimination and landlord resistance to the voucher program. Such obstacles limit the ability of voucher recipients to choose quality housing and access job opportunities in regional economies.

Determined to address these barriers, HUD believes that faith-based and

other community non-profit organizations in particular can play a crucial role in HUD's effort to increase the supply of quality, affordable housing. As Secretary Cuomo said, **“Who better to help families find housing or to enlist landlords in providing housing than the faith-based organizations who sit at the very heart of our communities?”**

Faith-based and community non-profit organizations are uniquely positioned to optimize the impact of Housing Choice Vouchers. They have the experience in community organizing, credibility in public dialogue, access to volunteers and other resources and an ability to tap into people's inner commitment to social responsibility in ways that often elude government, business, and other local institutions.

To be eligible for the new HUD assistance, faith-based and community non-profit organizations need to work in partnership with the local housing authority. Specifically, the grants could be used to:

- encourage new landlords to rent housing units to voucher recipients and educate them about the process
- promote HUD's fair housing goals in the context of voucher use
- provide mobility, rental and homeownership counseling to families with vouchers or become a HUD certified counseling agency
- familiarize faith-based organizations with rules and regulations governing the voucher rental assistance program
- form mentoring groups (like those common in welfare reform) to provide voucher recipients moving to new communities with ongoing support, and to help with related issues, such as employment, child care, etc.
- respond to participating landlord concerns in the event of problems
- put families in touch with a Housing Choice voucher-holder who has successfully navigated the system
- make funds available (or establish a revolving loan fund) for security deposits, first and last month's rent, moving costs, utility hook-up fees, and other costs that families may need to bear to afford a housing voucher
- remove stereotypes that misrepresent the true success of the program at the neighborhood level

The partnership development grants will be awarded competitively through HUD's annual SuperNOFA process, which commences early next year.

For more information contact **Brian Siebenlist at (202) 708-0614 x 5415 or e-mail Brian_Siebenlist@hud.gov.**

Partners for Sacred Places

An Interview with A. Robert Jaeger and Diane Cohen, Co-Directors

Partners for Sacred Places is a non-denominational, nonprofit organization.

Partners for Sacred Places helps Americans embrace, care for and make good use of older and historic religious properties. It promotes a new understanding of how these places sustain communities.

Tens of thousands of congregations, throughout the nation, meet in older churches, synagogues, mosques, and meetinghouses. Many older religious properties are in poor physical condition. Deferred repair needs are becoming more urgent and costly, threatening the continued existence of many buildings.

These same properties are also a new generation of community centers, meeting the needs of non-congregation members and serving a larger public purpose. They are neutral convening places for people seeking to solve community problems, local sites for health and human services, and natural homes for artistic expression. Threats to the buildings endanger their future as centers of community life and destabilize the community programs housed in them.

Partners for Sacred Places (Partners) has embarked upon a public policy initiative to demonstrate the central place of older religious properties in America's communities. To increase support for their care and active use, **Partners** commissioned a study of how older religious properties support public goals.

According to the study, the economic value provided to the community of building space, utilities, staff and volunteer time, and donated funds and supplies amounts to \$140,000 per congregation each year. The value of congregational support to the human service

and culture infrastructure in Philadelphia, which has more than 700 older or historic religious properties, is close to \$100 million per year.

Many constituents of the Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships (CCIP) are congregations housed in older, historic buildings, or nonprofit groups working in such space, so the Center thought it would be worthwhile to learn more about this group. To that end, we talked with **A. Robert Jaeger, and Diane Cohen, Co-Directors of Partners for Sacred Places (PSP).**

CCIP: Tell me about Partners for Sacred Places.

PSP: The organization has existed for eleven years. In our early years, we focused almost exclusively on preserving physical structure, but over time, we have begun to work to identify, preserve and enhance the social significance of these places in their communities. Of course physical integrity is still the bottom line: these places will be preserved, or they will crumble and be destroyed. If the buildings are lost, the programs they house will be displaced and disrupted.

CCIP: You say that Partners has aligned its services to help both congregations and neighborhoods make the most of these properties. What have you learned about how local churches contribute to their communities?

PSP: Two years ago, we published a report, *Sacred Places at Risk: New evidence on how endangered older churches and synagogues serve communities*. Among the report's key findings, we discovered that 91 percent of

all surveyed congregations with older buildings open their doors to the larger community; on average, congregations house four ongoing community service programs and more than 80 percent of those who benefit from the programs are not members of the sponsoring congregation. Impressively, we found that on average, the subsidy congregations give to their community programs is valued between \$100,000 and \$140,000 a year, or 10-15 times what they receive in return from the users of their space.

CCIP: Your findings are really impressive. Where did you find the data to support your findings?

PSP: We didn't find it. Partners worked for eight years to fund, design and implement a study. The research studied 100 congregations in six cities. To our knowledge, it is the only study of its kind and we are quite proud of it. It was designed and carried out by a research team headed by Ram A. Cnaan, of the University of Pennsylvania. The Pew Charitable Trusts were so impressed by the study and its results, they are funding a similar study of all the churches in Philadelphia.

CCIP: Is there other follow-up stemming from the study?

PSP: Yes. Partners for Sacred Places has identified eight jurisdictions that currently have some formal, funded and staffed effort to preserve these properties as community resources. We have set ourselves a goal to add 12 - 15 additional jurisdictions to that list. Our goal is to help local leaders coalesce and develop a program that will provide assistance to those properties on a sustained basis over years to come. We will work as a bridging institution between religious,

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Religious Organizations as Social Service Providers: A New Study

A report entitled "Religious Organizations, Anti-Poverty Relief, and Charitable Choice: A Feasibility Study of Faith-Based Welfare Reform in Mississippi", written by Assistant Professor John P. Bartkowski of Mississippi State University and Assistant Professor Helen A. Regis of Louisiana State University was recently released.

In this report, Bartkowski and Regis explore the feasibility of implementing charitable choice initiatives in Mississippi. Charitable choice initiatives identify religious congregations as prospective providers of social services in states that contract for service delivery through local nonprofit agencies. Although charitable choice does not apply to HUD programs, this information is useful for social service providers.

Bartkowski and Regis found that religious communities currently offer many different types of aid to the needy, that several different aid-provision strategies are employed by local faith communities, and that there was actually a wide spectrum of opinions on faith-based welfare reform among the religious leaders interviewed.

For those who are interested in charitable choice, please access http://endowment.pwcglobal.com/grants/John_Bartkowski.asp.

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 preservation and community development organizations and government agencies. All of them are stakeholders, but because their interests are different, they have not collaborated much in the past. We will provide the technical expertise to bring them together. Together, their work will be much more effective; we know this from experience.

CCIP: The Center's constituency includes congregations and community development workers. Are you seeking participation from those groups?

PSP: Yes. The first three sites are Denver, New Jersey and North Dakota. Selection of the remaining sites, what we call the second and third generation, will respond to local initiatives. If your readers have an older congregational building (church, synagogue, etc.) or work in one, we encourage them to contact us. We will suggest ways they can begin to build a coalition of support. When we select locality sites, we will be looking for invitations from areas where there is already some interest and structure of support.

CCIP: The report is compelling reading, how can readers of this interview get a copy of *Sacred Places at Risk*? What about those who want more information, or want your help for their church or synagogue?

PSP: They can call 215-567-3234. Partners for Sacred Places also has a website, www.sacredplaces.org.

HUD Terms

Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI):

BEDI grants enhance the security or improve the viability of a project financed with new Section 108 guaranteed loan authority. HUD intends BEDI and Section 108 funds to finance projects and activities that will provide near-term results and demonstrable economic benefits, such as job creation and increases in the local tax base. HUD web site at www.hud.gov/bedifact.html.

Continuum of Care:

A program to help more than 330,000 homeless Americans get housing, job training, child care, and other services. The Continuum of Care, which is the centerpiece of the federal policy on homelessness, stresses permanent solutions to homelessness through comprehensive and collaborative community planning. In 1997, the Continuum of Care was one of 25 finalists, out of 1400 competitors, for the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award that is awarded by the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

HOPE VI:

HOPE VI, or the Urban Revitalization Program, enables demolition of obsolete public housing, revitalization of public housing sites and distribution of supportive services to the public housing residents affected by these actions.

Did You Know?

The sixth annual **Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry** will take place **July 17-21** at the former **Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, TN**. Religious leaders and other faith-based advocates for children will gather for five days of spiritual renewal, networking, and continuing education about children. Participants will explore how faith relates to children and advocacy, hear inspiring preaching on children's concerns, gain solid, up-to-date information on children's needs, and acquire new skills, models, and strategies to implement programs to help children and strengthen families in their own congregations and communities. More information can be found at: www.childrensdefense.org/moral_institute.html.



Center Toolbox: The Consolidated Plan

The Consolidated Plan provides the framework for a planning process used by States and localities to identify housing, homeless, community and economic development needs and resources and to tailor a strategic plan for meeting those needs.

For citizens, the Consolidated Plan provides a way to help define their government's priorities for addressing housing, homeless, community and economic development needs. For grantees, it simplifies the steps needed to receive funds under four HUD block grant programs: **the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)**. It also provides a way to measure if the activities they funded with these programs actually meet the needs and objectives identified by the community.

Submitting an approved consolidated plan allows the recipients of CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, and ESG to receive their annual funds. States and localities that qualify for formula allocations of CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, and ESG funds must complete a 3- to 5-year Consolidated Plan and annual updates. They also submit an **annual performance report 90 days after the program year ends**, although this report is not an application requirement.

Citizens and their representatives benefit from the increased coordination and

effectiveness that the Consolidated Plan brings to local housing and development activities. They also benefit since they have an increased opportunity to provide comments and help shape priorities for action.

A Consolidated Plan consists of a 3- to 5-year strategic plan, annual action plans, and annual performance reports.

The strategic plan contains three parts:

- (1) a housing, homeless, community and economic development needs assessment;**
- (2) a housing market analysis; and**
- (3) long-term strategies to meet priority needs.**

The action plan describes the specific projects and activities that a jurisdiction will undertake in the coming year with its HUD funds to address those priority needs. The action plan also contains certifications indicating that a jurisdiction will follow certain requirements like furthering fair housing.

To receive its annual funding, the lead agency for a jurisdiction must submit a 3- to 5-year consolidated plan (every 3-5 years) and an annual action plan 45 days before its program year begins. Each jurisdiction may decide when its program year begins to better coordinate the many funding sources it will use.

While HUD does not provide funds earmarked for the development of a Consolidated Plan, State and local government expenses related to preparing one is an eligible use of CDBG and HOME administrative funds.

The Consolidated Plan is authorized under Title I of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 12701-11). Program regulations are at 24 CFR Part 91. The Consolidated Plan final rule is available on HUD's website at www.HUD.gov. The Office of Executive Services in HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) administers the program. **Contact: Sal Sclafani, (202) 708-1283 ext. 4364.**

HUD provides executive summaries of the Consolidated Plan for every State and locality that submits one. For other information concerning the Consolidated Plan, contact **Community Connections at 1-800-998-9999.**

